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Stepfamilies across Ethnicities

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Gabriella Erdélyi
Special Editor of the Thematic Issue

Contents

INTRODUCTION

- GABRIELLA ERDÉLYI Differences between Western and East Central European
Patterns of Remarriage and Their Consequences
for Children Living in Stepfamilies 657

ARTICLES

- ALMUT BUES Dynasty as a Patchwork House, or the (Evil)
Stepmother: The Example of Zofia Jagiellonka 669
- ANDREA FEHÉR Noble Lineage as Stepfamily Network:
An Eighteenth-Century Noble Autobiography
from the Principality of Transylvania 695
- KINGA PAPP Dávid Rozsnyai's "Orphans": A Stepfamily through
Divorce in Seventeenth-Century Transylvania 726
- KATALIN SIMON Remarriage Patterns and Stepfamily Formation
in a German-speaking Market Town
in Eighteenth-Century Hungary 757
- ELEONÓRA GÉRA "Mulier Imperiosa": The Stepfamilies of Eva Elisabetha
in Buda in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century 789
- SÁNDOR NAGY Family Formation, Ethnicity, Divorce,
and Marriage Law: Jewish Divorces in Hungary,
1786–1914 812

BOOK REVIEWS

- The Economy of Medieval Hungary. Edited by József Laszlovszky, Balázs Nagy, Péter Szabó, and András Vadas. East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450 49. Reviewed by Christoph Sonnlechner 843
- Das Wiener Fürstentreffen von 1515: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Habsburgisch-Jagiellonischen Doppelvermählung. Edited by Bogusław Dybaś and István Tringli. Reviewed by Katarzyna Niemczyk 846
- Život u srednjovekovnom Splitu: Svakodnevnica obrtnika u 14. i 15. stoljeću [Life in Medieval Split: Everyday Life of Craftsmen in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries]. By Tonija Andrić. Biblioteka Hrvatska povjesnica, Monografije i studije, III/79. Reviewed by Zrinka Nikolić Jakus 849
- Erdélyi országgyűlések a 16–17. században [Transylvanian Assemblies in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries]. By Teréz Oborni. Reviewed by János Nagy 853
- Házasság Budán: Családtörténetek a török kiűzése után újjászülető (fő)városból 1686–1726 [Marriage in Buda: Family Histories in the (Capital) City Reborn After the Expulsion of the Turks]. By Eleonóra Géra. Reviewed by Lilla Krász 857
- Egy tudós hazafi Bécsben: Görög Demeter és könyvtára [A Learned Patriot in Vienna: Demeter Görög and His Library]. By Edina Zvara. Reviewed by Attila Verók 861
- Landscapes of Disease: Malaria in Modern Greece. By Katerina Gardikas. Reviewed by Róbert Balogh 864
- A Contested Borderland: Competing Russian and Romanian Visions of Bessarabia in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century. By Andrei Cușco. Reviewed by Ágoston Berecz 867
- Embers of Empire: Continuity and Rupture in the Habsburg Successor States after 1918. Edited by Paul Miller and Claire Morelon. Reviewed by Florian Kühner-Wielach 870
- Social Sciences in the Other Europe Since 1945. Edited by Adela Hîncu and Victor Karady. Reviewed by Réka Krizmanics 874
- Vanguard of the Revolution: The Global Idea of the Communist Party. By A. James McAdams. Reviewed by Tom Junes 878



INTRODUCTION

Differences between Western and East Central European Patterns of Remarriage and Their Consequences for Children Living in Stepfamilies

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In the preindustrial period, children were significantly more likely to lose a parent before they reached adulthood for a number of reasons, including disease, childbed mortality, famines and wars. To secure the upbringing of surviving children (or even simply the birth of children) and to ensure economic survival, many widowed parents sought to rebuild broken families by remarrying. As a result, it was not uncommon for people to live as members of stepfamilies, either as stepchildren with halfsiblings and/or stepsiblings or as stepparents. Until divorce became largely a civil institution in the so-called West and, in the twentieth century, began to become more economically feasible and socially acceptable, stepfamilies came into being primarily because of death and not divorce. Thus, it follows that stepfamily experiences before these changes differed for children in some key aspects, while there were also important similarities on the basis of which meaningful comparisons can be made. Two articles in this thematic issue deal, however, with the history of the institution of divorce and the blended families which came up in the wake of the breakup of a marriage, since divorce in East Central Europe was, if not common, certainly not an exceptional practice, neither in Jewish nor in Protestant communities.

Burgeoning historical interest in stepfamilies began among scholars in the United States,¹ where the ratio of children and adults living in stepfamilies to children and adults living in traditional families is the highest in the modern West,² and the growing sociological and psychological secondary literature has been attempting to address this phenomenon. *Stepfamilies in Europe 1400–1800*,

1 Lisa Wilson, *Stepfamilies in early America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

2 Rose Kreider, Daphne Lofquist, “Adopted Children and Stepchildren: 2010. Population Characteristics,” *US Census Bureau* (2014) April, 20–572. <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2014/demo/p20-572.html>.

a collection of essays edited by Lyndan Warner, was perhaps the first major step in the comparative study of premodern stepfamilies.³ One of the strengths of the collection is that it reconsiders some of the findings of the extensive studies concerning remarriage patterns and examines the frequency and structures of stepfamilies which came into existence as a consequence of remarriage (such as the higher presence of stepmothers compared to stepfathers). Moreover, by analyzing a wide range of written and visual sources with a sharp eye on stepfamilies, it also constructs a cultural-historical narrative of relationships within the stepfamily, thus shedding light, for example, on the supportive and caring roles played by stepparents and step-kin and encouraging us to discard the fairytale figure and plot woven around the image of the wicked stepmother.

Our research group, which has enjoyed the funding and support of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences,⁴ aims to follow both lines of this research agenda, shifting the emphasis, however, from northwestern Europe and the Mediterranean, the main focus of Warner's volume, to East Central Europe (Hungary, Romania, Russia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, and Poland). Moreover, as we rely on quantitative approaches, we offer more insight into the stepfamily dynamics of non-elite groups, and the ethnic and religious diversity of the region allows us to draw meaningful distinctions and comparisons within the region. Our fundamental intention in this thematic issue is to provide a clear overview of this work in progress, presenting demographic, legal, and social-historical approaches to the study of the history of the stepfamily in a variety of social, ethnic, and religious settings. The introduction below, however, focuses on the preliminary findings of our research concerning one theme, the gendered patterns of remarriage in East Central Europe and some of the consequences of these patterns for the caregiving and rearing of children in stepfamilies.

A fair amount of knowledge has been accumulated with regard to the remarriage patterns in northwestern and southern Europe (the "West") and Asia (the "East").⁵ One finding which had become common knowledge in the

3 Lyndan Warner, ed., *Stepfamilies in Europe, 1400–1800* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2018).

4 The project entitled *Integrating Families: Stepfamilies and Children in the Past*, carried out by HAS Momentum Family History Research Group. <http://www.families.hu/en/>

5 On the extensive historiography of remarriage pattern in pre-modern Europe, see Warner, *Stepfamilies*, 266–67. On Japan: Satomi Kurosu, "Remarriage in a Stem Family System in Early Modern Japan," *Continuity and Change* 22, no. 3 (2007): 429–58. Comparatively: Satomi Kurosu, Christer Lundh, and Marco Breschi, "Remarriage, Gender, and Rural Households: A Comparative Analysis of Widows and Widowers in Europe and Asia," in *Similarity in Difference: Marriage in Europe and Asia, 1700–1900*, edited by Lundh Christer and Kurosu Satomi (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press, 2014), 169–208.

secondary literature is simply that, between 1500 and 1900, men remarried more frequently as well as more rapidly than women after the loss of a spouse, both in the West and the East. Even when they were already middle-aged or older, they often sought and found new wives, and the likelihood that they would remarry declined less over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than it did among women.⁶ Our preliminary findings concerning East Central Europe, however, only partly correspond to this pattern of remarriage. Some divergences from the familiar model seem to have emerged. Analyses of a variety of cases and data sets done according to divergent methodologies seem to suggest that both widowers and widows, but especially widows, were more likely to remarry (less content with staying alone) than in the West.⁷ How can we account for this difference? What factors made it more likely that a widow would find a new spouse?

In order to answer this question, it may well help to take into consideration the fact that the intention to remarry was very much influenced by the number and ages of children a widow or widower had.⁸ Widowed fathers often remarried within a matter of weeks or months if they had infants who were still suckling,⁹ and the community itself seems, for this reason, to have been less concerned with whether or not they waited for the usual year of mourning to pass. Thus, parents with small children constituted a significant share of the people who remarried (alongside widows and widowers who had not had any children from their first marriages and thus still sought an heir or heirs). For a widowed parent

6 Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux, "Revisiting the decline in remarriage in early modern Europe: the case of Rheims in France," *The History of the Family* 15 (2010): 283–97.

7 On the rural context (Szekély Land, today in Romania), see Sándor Lakatos, "Házasságkötés, megözvegyülés és újraházasodás a Homoródok vidékén 1830–1939 között," forthcoming in *Özvegystratégiák és árvasorsok Magyarországon, 1550–1940*, edited by Gabriella Erdélyi, Budapest 2020. Lakatos examined 2,600 marriages. In comparison with averages in the West of 10–15 percent, 21 percent of marriages involved a widow (18,3 percent) or/and a widower (16,2 percent) or a divorced man or woman. For similar results see Levente Pakot, "Megözvegyülés és újraházasodás székelyföldi rurális közösségekben, 1840–1930," *Demográfia* 52 (2009): 55–88, 62–63. On urban communities, see Árpád Tóth, "Mostohasors? Mozaikcsaládokban felnőtt gyermekek érvényesülési lehetőségei a pozsonyi evangélikus közösségben, 1740–1850," forthcoming *ibid.* Edina Tünde Gál, "A kolera szegényei: Árvák és özvegyek az 1873-as kolozsvári kolerajárvány után," *Ibid.* Cf. Swedish remarriage patterns: Martin Dribe, Christer Lundh, "Social Norms and Human Agency: Marriage in Nineteenth Century Sweden," in *Similarity in Difference*, 233.

8 Gál, "A kolera szegényei."

9 It would be worth studying the demographics of remarriage from the perspective of breastfeeding customs. Alice Velková and Petr Tureček have taken a step in this direction: Alice Velková, Petr Tureček, "Influence of parental death on child mortality and the phenomenon of the stepfamily in western Bohemia in 1708–1834." Forthcoming in *Journal of Family History*, thematic issue on stepfamilies.

with small children, remarriage served as an attempt to replace the lost parent, something children who had already reached adulthood would have needed much less. This was a salient pattern both in the East and the West (including East Central Europe), and it merits noting that in both parts of the world, widowed men with small children had less difficulty finding a new spouse (and stepmother for their children) than women with small children.¹⁰

We also identified at least one other significant difference between the patterns prevailing in the West and the patterns in East Central Europe: new marriages which were “uneven” from the perspective of age were less common than they were in the West, and this was true in areas with very different economic and social circumstances. It was the case, for instance, among the German-speaking burghers of Buda and Óbuda in the eighteenth century and in the Transylvanian city of Kolozsvár (today Cluj) and Transylvanian Székely villages in the nineteenth century.¹¹ A widower in East Central Europe was more likely than a widower in the West to marry a widow instead of a maiden (in the West, only 20 percent of widowers who remarried married a widow, while this figure was 45.3 percent in Transylvania).¹² In other words, beyond the familiar scenarios of a childless widower taking a second wife who was significantly younger and of a significantly lower social status in the hope of having an heir or a younger apprentice marrying a master’s widow in part to gain a claim to her workshop and guild membership, such uneven marriages were not a customary practice. How might one explain this difference? Given the higher mortality rates, were there simply more widows and widowers on the marriage market? Was there greater communal anxiety about single men and women? Was living in a marriage a more important factor from the perspective of social prestige and male/female honor?

10 Lundh, Kurosu, Breschi, “Remarriage, Gender,” 205. Tóth however in the same article “Mostohasors” has found that in Pressburg (Slovakia) widowed women with children remarried more often than men.

11 Eleonóra Géra, “Városi és kamarai árvák a 18. századi Budán,” forthcoming in *Özvegystratégiák*, Katalin Simon, “Remarriage Patterns and Stepfamily Formation in a German-speaking Market-Town in Eighteenth-Century Hungary,” in present issue of the *Hungarian Historical Review*; Lakatos, “Házasságkötés,” 62; Gál, “A kolera szegényei.”

12 Pakot, “Megözvegyülés,” 62. Michel Oris, Emiko Ochiai, “Family Crisis in the Context of Different Family Systems: Frameworks and Evidence,” in R. Derosas, M. Oris, eds., *When Dad Died: individuals and families coping with distress in past societies* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2002), 17–80. In Sweden in the nineteenth century, marriages between widows and widowers accounted for only 10 percent of the total number of remarriages. Dribe, Lundh, “Social Norms,” 235.

The above differences, including the significantly greater frequency of marriages among widows and widowers in comparison to the situation in the West, suggests that a widow in East Central Europe had more value on the marriage market and was more interested in remarrying. One explanation for this difference may well lie in the different marital property regimes and the inheritance practices in the two parts of Europe. Clearly, one element which would have left a widow more eager to remarry is the simple fact that, in East Central Europe, she did not lose control over her properties. The mixed property regime which applied to most marriages in Hungary (there were both shared properties and individually owned properties) gave a widow more independence and more rights than regimes under which a husband acquired full control of his wife's properties and, indeed, was the only legal entity in a marriage (one extreme but illuminating example of this was the legal doctrine of coverture, which remained part of common law in England throughout most of the nineteenth century).¹³ Furthermore, both in rural peasant communities and in urban communities, girls' and women's claims to inheritance were equal to those of men.¹⁴ It was therefore not uncommon for a widow to inherit her husband's estates (meaning in this case plots of land worked by serfs) and to continue to manage these estates. Widows who belonged to the urban burgher class inherited half of any properties or wealth that they acquired with their husbands, and again, it was not uncommon for a widow to continue to manage these properties (including shops and businesses), at least for a time. Together with a woman's individual properties (meaning what she had inherited from her mother and father), this wealth acquired in the course of a marriage meant that a widow seeking to remarry was often considerably wealthier than unmarried women who were seeking spouses and therefore had at least this advantage on the marriage market. In places where women were unable, legally, to inherit properties from their husbands (for instance Italy and England) and were given back only what

13 Sándor Nagy, *Engesztelhetetlen gyűlölet: Válás Budapesten, 1850–1914* (Budapest, 2018), 320. On the Russian marital property regime, which was very similar to the Hungarian regime, see Barbara Alpern Engel, *Breaking the Ties That Bound: The Politics of Marital Strife in Late Imperial Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London–New York: Routledge, 1993).

14 The inheritance model among the nobility, in contrast, was patrilineal. Girls were entitled to one-fourth of the patrimony, which they usually received in personal assets and money as a dowry when they married. It became theirs again if their husbands died, and this complemented the dowry which they received from their husbands' estates.

they had brought to the marriage in dowry,¹⁵ they did not have the advantage of a financially favorable situation in the competition with unmarried women for spouses on the marriage market. This may well explain, at least partly, why a widower in these regions was more likely than a widower in East Central Europe to choose an unmarried woman as his bride. Thus, in Hungary, whether they belonged to the peasantry or the urban burgher community, widows were both more appealing as potential mates than widows in the West and they were also more likely to consider remarrying, as remarriage did not threaten their financial independence.

Furthermore, over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, married women in the West lost rights to own properties independently, a tendency which the ethos of motherhood and the home may have been used to conceal. In contrast, no similar trends have been identified in Hungary.¹⁶ As a consequence, at least in part, of these factors, widows were less likely to remain single, including widows with young children.

How did these differences between the remarriage patterns in the West and patterns in East Central Europe affect the experiences of children? What influence did the stronger inclination among widowed parents in East Central Europe to remarry have on their lives, or the fact that many of the stepmothers in these new marriages were not young women who had been unmarried before they came into the broken families, but rather were themselves mothers with small children from an earlier marriage? Demographers tend to examine how deaths and remarriages of mothers and fathers affect their children's likelihood of surviving, marrying, and moving out of the parental home.¹⁷ While they tend to agree that a mother's death posed the single greatest threat to her children's changes of survival,¹⁸ this simple picture becomes more complex when one takes into consideration the effects of the arrival into a family of a

15 Jutta Sperling, "The Economics and Politics of Marriage," in *Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Couchmann Jane, Poska Allyson (Routledge, 2016), 214–30, 214.

16 Cavallo-Warner, "Introduction," in Sandra Cavallo, Lyndan Warner, eds., *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, (Harlow: Routledge, 1999), 13. Nagy, "Engesztelhetetlen gyűlölet," 317–30.

17 See for example on the timing of marriage of stepchildren: Levente Pakot, "Nemek és nemzedékek: Demográfiai reprodukció a 19–20. századi Székelyföldön," in *Központi Statisztikai Hivatal Népszégtudományi Intézetének Kutatási Jelentései* 95 (Budapest, 2013), 83.

18 E. Beekink, F. van Poppel, A. C. Liefbroer, "Surviving the Loss of the Parent in a Nineteenth-century Duch Provincial Town," *Journal of Social History*, 32 (1999): 641–69; R. Sear, R. Mace, "Who keeps children alive? A review of the effects of kin on child survival," *Evolution and Human Behavior* 29 (2008):1–18.

stepmother.¹⁹ The beneficial influence of a stepmother on the mortality rates of children in Sweden and China in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for instance, are clear, though in some regions, such as Quebec (within New France), mortality rates among children living with a stepmother were the same as mortality rates among children whose fathers did not remarry. Indeed, in the case of one German community in the eighteenth century, the arrival of a stepmother actually increased mortality among children from the previous marriage, especially girls.²⁰ However, Péter Óri's analysis of child mortality in the market town of Zsámbék (in Hungary, near Budapest), which had a Catholic and German-speaking peasant and craftsmen population, pinpoints instead primarily boys on whom their father's remarriage to a widowed woman had negative effects, especially if she brought her own children to the household.²¹

The question of the effects of stepfathers on stepchildren has not been given as much attention in the secondary literature. In the course of our comparative study of the questions of remarriage and stepfamilies in East Central Europe, we came across particularly interesting findings in eighteenth-century Western Bohemia. The authors Velková and Tureček narrowed the focus of their study to the fates of children five years old or younger, and they discovered that the death of the father was a particularly grave threat to the children because, when the mother was compelled to play the father's role, this meant that she was less able to play the traditional role of a mother as caregiver. When children were between the ages of two and five, stepmothers and stepfathers essentially could replace biological parents. In other words, what was important was not a biological ("blood") relationship, but rather the fulfillment of the role of parent as caregiver and provider.²² The articles in this thematic issue offer considerable evidence in support of this conclusion in a variety of situations.

19 S. Åckerman, U. Högberg, T. Andersson, "Survival of orphans in 19th century Sweden: The importance of remarriages," *Acta Paediatrica* 85 (1996): 981–85; C. Campbell, J. Z. Lee, "When husbands and parents die: Widowhood and orphanhood in late Imperial Liaoning, 1789–1909," in R. Derosas, M. Oris, *When Dad died*, 301–22.

20 Kai P. Willführ, Alain Gagnon, "Are Stepparents Always Evil? Parental Death, Remarriage, and Child Survival in Demographically Saturated Krummhörn (1720–1859) and Expanding Québec (1670–1750)," *Biodemography and Social Biology* 59, no. 2 (2013): 191–211.

21 Péter Óri, "Life courses in 18–19th century Hungary: the impact of the parents' widowhood and remarriage on their children's survival, Zsámbék, 1720–1850." Forthcoming in *Journal of Family History*, thematic issue on stepfamilies.

22 Velková, Tureček, "Influence of parental death."

An examination of remarriage patterns in the Romanian principalities (Moldavia and Wallachia) in the eighteenth century also calls attention to the figure of the stepfather. In practice, it was uncommon, both among the lower classes and among the social elites (the boyars) to take guardianship of children away from their mothers or to take children out from under their mothers' care. Almost without exception, children remained with their mothers, both in cases of divorce and in cases of widowhood and even if the mother remarried. As a result, instead of the high frequency of stepmothers, as was the case in the West, stepfathers became more typical figures of family life. This practice (children remaining with their mothers instead of becoming parts of their fathers' households, even when their mothers remarried and in spite of the fact that the society was patrilineal, both in its attitudes towards lineage and in its inheritance customs) was utterly extraordinary and contrasted starkly with practices in other parts of Europe, where the children of mothers who remarried had varying fates, but very often did not remain in their mothers' households.²³ The relationship between mother and child seems to have been particularly tight and strong, even if the control of the father's family over children grew in parallel with the children's inheritance. Is it possible that one factor which played a significant role in this difference was that divorce was not simply possible in the Orthodox Church, but was a relatively common practice?

And in contrast with a widow, who could reclaim her dowry and was entitled to a dower, a divorced woman often lost even her dowry and was under more economic pressure to remarry. Was this too perhaps a factor? A reading of the Church litigation records reveals cases in which the difference between law, according to which a remarried mother could not be the guardian of the children from her earlier marriage, and common practice was stark (in other words, remarried women often remained the guardians of their children in practice). Or was the bond between mother and children influenced by the distinctive aspects of female property rights and their devolution in the Romanian principalities? Was it also a factor that, in the Romanian principalities, a woman's dowry, which she received as part of her paternal patrimony, formed part of her children's

23 See for example Sylvie Perrier, "Stepfamily relationships in multigenerational households: The case of Toulouse, France in the eighteenth century," in *Stepfamilies in Europe 1400–1800*, ed. by Lyndan Warner (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 187–203. On the gender asymmetry of parent-child relations after remarriage (in other words, in stepfamilies) and the possibilities of inclusive stepfamilies (i.e. remarried mothers living together with their children from their first marriages even though they could not be their guardians), see also Warner's conclusions in the same volume, 248–52.

inheritance, and thus the dowry was not given back to her family of birth even if she remarried? Remarriage, thus, did not pose any threat to the financial interests and wellbeing of the children, unlike (for instance) in the case of the Florentine aristocracy, where a woman who remarried reclaimed ownership of her dowry (more precisely, it became the property of her father and brothers) and for this reason was labeled a cruel mother by her children.²⁴

To return to the perspective of demographers: why did children in the aforementioned eighteenth-century German community whose widowed fathers remarried end up at a disadvantage when compared to children whose widowed fathers did not remarry? Was this a consequence of neglect, abuse, undernourishment, or competition with halfsiblings and/or stepsiblings? Willführ and Gagnon, who adopted an evolutionary approach to their interpretation of the sources, suggest that in all likelihood the explanation lies not in the abuse or neglect suffered by children because of a stepmother's indifference or hostility, but rather in the father's and stepmother's lack of parenting skills.²⁵ This is an interesting hypothesis, and it is particularly thought-provoking if one takes into consideration the distinctive feature of remarriage patterns in Hungary, namely that a marriage between a widow and a widower was much more common as in the West. Given their experiences in their first marriages, widowed mothers who remarried may well have had better skills in caregiving and childrearing than new wives who had not been married or raised children before. It is not immediately obvious, of course, that fathers who were seeking to remarry necessarily took into consideration a prospective wife's talents or experience as a caregiver for children. It is also worth considering the extent to which the relationships between husband and wife, which as noted earlier were more balanced from the perspective of age than in the West, affected relationships between stepparents and stepchildren. In our search for insights into the individual considerations of parents and experiences of children in these situations, we are compelled to rely on ego-documents. A text left by an anonymous Jewish memoirist from seventeenth-century Bohemia offers an example of one such ego-document. The author remembers his stepmother as having been very young and thus having lacked parenting skills. His stepmother, he writes, was "still a young child who did not know how to bring us up in cleanliness, as is necessary with little

24 Giulia Calvi, "'Cruel' and 'nurturing' mothers: The construction of motherhood in Tuscany (1500–1800)," *L'Homme* 17, no. 1 (2013): 75–92.

25 Kai Willführ, Alain Gagnon, "Are Stepmothers Evil or Simply Unskilled? Infant Death Clustering in Recomposed Families," *Biodemography and Social Biology* 58, no. 2 (2012): 149–61.

boys, nor could she properly care for us when we were sick.”²⁶ The stepmother, according to her stepson, was not evil or abusive, but simply ignorant and unskilled, as she was young and lacked experience as a parent.

The research by Péter Őri, another member of our research group, throws some light on the other side of the coin. His study of child mortality suggests that widows with children of their own from a previous marriage tended to favor their children over the children brought to a second (or later) marriage by their new husbands. The arrival of a stepmother who brought older stepchildren into the household and the new family put the sons of her new husband at risk first and foremost. In the competition for resources and care, the father’s children, and in particular his sons, were at a disadvantage.²⁷

In the period between adolescence and marriage, when childrearing became for the most part the responsibility of the father, the situation of children changed, or at least so the findings of our research group suggest. We used quantitative analyses of data from Church records of births, marriages, and deaths to identify patterns in family formation (family reconstitution) and study the fates of stepchildren. In a manner which, to my knowledge, is pioneering in the secondary literature, they examined the question of whether, in the communities on which they focused, sons and daughters from a previous marriage were at a disadvantage (as one would expect on the basis of collective fears, the law, and stereotypes) in comparison with children of a new marriage when it came to their chances for success in adulthood (including career, marriage, and social status).

On the basis of data concerning stepchildren belonging to the community of German-speaking Lutherans in the city of Pressburg (Pozsony in Hungary, today Bratislava, Slovakia), a community numbering roughly 5,000 people, it was unusual to draw distinctions between the stepchildren and children of remarried parents in the division of family wealth and resources. Boys were given instruction and taught a trade before they married, and stepdaughters were just as likely as daughters of the new marriage to find husbands whose social status matched theirs. Children inherited the social status of their biological parents, which meant that there could be differences in status between halfsiblings, and there were significant differences between the opportunities afforded to sons and the opportunities afforded to daughters, but this was the case among siblings as

26 Tali Berner, “Constructions of Childhood in Early Modern Jewish Ego-Documents,” *Journal of Family History* 39 (2014): 101–13, 107.

27 Őri, “Life courses.”

well, not just stepsiblings. In other words, these differences in opportunity were determined by gender, not by whether a given child was from a first or second marriage.²⁸

The study of another community also suggested that the figure of the neglected or abused stepchild was an exception more than a rule (fairytales notwithstanding). In the 50 stepfamilies in a Transdanubian market town (Csetnek, *Štítník* in Slovakia today) in the middle of the eighteenth century, halfsiblings (stepchildren and children) had the same life expectancy and the same chances of marrying.²⁹ These findings may seem to contradict the image one has from the writings of stepchildren memoirists, who seem to have feared that when their widowed parent remarried, this would lead to their marginalization in the family.³⁰ Should we perhaps consider the image of the stepmother as the embodiment of cruelty at least in part (perhaps in large part) a figure woven of the fears of children from first marriages? Further research is needed in order to determine the chances halfsiblings in other communities had (beyond the Slovak-speaking Catholic peasants and German-speaking Lutheran burghers), including life expectancy, career, marriage, etc.

It is worth summarizing here the initial findings of our work, which this thematic issue presents in greater detail in the individual articles. In East Central Europe, widowed spouses seem to have been somewhat more inclined (even in later periods of life) to remarry than in the West.³¹ Thus, single-parent families, especially with small children, were rarer in comparison with reconstituted families. Children in these stepfamilies may have been given better care and thus had better chances of survival presumably in no small part because in a marriage between a widow and a widower, which was more common than in the West, both parents were likely already to have had experience raising and providing care for children. Whatever disadvantages may have been caused by rivalries between the children brought into the new unions and their younger halfsiblings, they were offset by an attitude towards parenting according to which the parents were

28 Tóth, "Mostohasors?"

29 Baros-Gyimóthy Eszter, "Édesek és mostohák: Gyermezsorsok a csetneki katolikus egyházközség csonka- és mozaikcsaládjaiban, 1735–1807," in forthcoming *Özvegystratégiák*.

30 Stephen Collins, "British Stepfamily Relationships, 1500–1800," *Journal of Family History* 16, no. 4 (1991): 331–44.

31 On this point and only on this point, our findings correspond to Hajnal's model of first marriages in Eastern Europe. In Eastern Europe, marriage was simply far more common. In the West, there were more people who remained unmarried. See Kurosu, Lundh, "Remarriage," 204. Kurosu and Lundh see no correlation between marriage patterns as defined by John Hajnal and remarriage patterns.

as responsible for raising and providing for stepchildren as they were for rearing their biological children. One of the goals of the research our group continues to pursue is to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of stepfamily formation and relationships within stepfamilies within a regionally and socially comparative framework, taking into consideration such aspects as marital property regimes, inheritance practices, kinship structures, and the cultural and religious meanings and values of kinship ties.